



NEWS from the

Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee

Senator Blanche L. Lincoln, Chairman agriculture.senate.gov

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Fighting For Agriculture Disaster Relief

This week, I have been working with my colleagues in the Senate Finance Committee on a \$1.5 billion disaster package that was to be included in the bipartisan Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment (HIRE) Act. The package is based on legislation I introduced with Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., in November to provide assistance for farmers affected by heavy rains, floods and other weather-related disasters.

Unfortunately, [the proposed HIRE Act was set aside yesterday by Senate leadership](#) but I will continue my efforts to see that this bipartisan legislation is brought to the floor.

Arkansas's farm families, like many across the nation this year, have been devastated by weather-related disasters. Heavy rains and flooding made last season's harvest nearly impossible and many producers are now unsure if they will be able to survive another year. With agriculture providing over 270,000 jobs and contributing over \$9 billion each year to Arkansas's economy, we cannot afford to see our farmers go out of business. My proposed disaster package would provide the disaster relief that our producers need quickly and would help save jobs right here in Arkansas.

Below, I share some of the comments I have received over the past few days:

"Agriculture is the backbone of the Arkansas economy and the past year's devastating weather puts us at risk of losing even more jobs. We are grateful to have Blanche Lincoln as our champion for Arkansas agriculture in Washington and thank her for fighting to get us this much-needed help. I look forward to working with her to deliver assistance to our aquaculture and specialty crop farmers and give the Arkansas economy the boost it needs," **Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Dick Bell.**

"We applaud Sen. Lincoln's persistence on disaster support for America's farmers. She understands the limitations of our existing farm programs, and has been relentless in helping other lawmakers understand the best way to ensure agricultural production remains viable and fruitful. Because of our nation's farm support programs, the American farmer remains the most efficient in the world, and the result of that is the safest, most affordable food supply for our citizens," **said Randy Veach, President, Arkansas Farm Bureau.**

"The Arkansas economy, both agricultural and non-agricultural, has been shaken by the combination of the 2009 recession and by the wettest year on record. As an agricultural state we are in desperate need of what this disaster package has to offer. The timing of this legislation has never been more critical," **said Faulkner County rice, soybean and wheat farmer Joe Torian.**

"Senator Lincoln heard our cry for help and has answered with a disaster package that will help Arkansas farmers get back on their feet. We thank her for fighting for this much-needed assistance to us and giving us the certainty that is necessary to plan for the future," **said Arkansas rice and soybean**

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farmer Dow Brantley.

"This disaster package will be a tremendous help to Arkansas farmers who have suffered untold damages due to the unprecedented weather. Many farmers are in bad shape, and we appreciate Senator Lincoln fighting to get this assistance," said **Monroe County rice, soybean, corn and wheat farmer Mike Booker**.

"This disaster assistance is really needed. This is the worse crop that I have seen in my 35 years of farming, and I applaud Senator Lincoln's work to get us this help," said **Dumas-area cotton and soybean farmer Percy Morris**.

"With 22 inches of rain in October, this assistance is greatly needed and appreciated. We are fortunate to have Senator Lincoln fighting for us as the Chairman of the Senate Ag Committee," said **Arkansas farmer Greg Day**.

"Producers all across Arkansas have been impacted by the unprecedented weather disasters while trying to produce a crop in 2009. This package provided by Senator Lincoln will help keep our agricultural industry and the jobs associated with it viable," said **Arkansas farmer Gary Sebree**.

"High feed costs in 2009 were devastating to aquaculture nationwide. This assistance will offset some of those costs and help the aquaculture industry recover," said **Ted McNulty, Director of Aquaculture Division of Arkansas Agriculture Department**.

"Due to unprecedented rainfall from planting through harvest, producers through the entire Mississippi delta have suffered crop losses and higher operating costs. This assistance will be most welcome in helping producers move forward with the 2010 crops," said **Aldo Cingolani of First National Bank of McGehee**.

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